

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE BLOGGERS ROUNDTABLE WITH MAJOR GENERAL  
DOUGLAS STONE, USMC, COMMANDING GENERAL, TF-134, MNF-I DETAINEE  
OPERATIONS VIA CONFERENCE CALL FROM BAGHDAD, IRAQ TIME: 9:30 A.M. EDT  
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Q Charlie Quidnunc here from Wizbang --

GEN. STONE: Hello. Major General Doug Stone. Can I help you?

CHARLES "JACK" HOLT (chief, New Media Operations, OASD PA): General  
Stone, Jack Holt here with the bloggers roundtable. Welcome to the bloggers  
roundtable again, sir. Thanks so much for joining us.

GEN. STONE: Jack, it's good to be with you again.

MR. HOLT: Thank you, sir. Do you have an opening statement for us  
today?

GEN. STONE: Well, you know, I can -- how long do you usually reserve  
opening statements for? MR. HOLT: Just as long as you think it's necessary.

GEN. STONE: (Laughs.) Well, you know, given that I can't exactly  
remember we were last time, let me give you kind of a quick thumbnail. We just  
crossed 25,000 in detention today. The statistic has changed a little bit.  
We've dropped two points. We're now down to 83 percent Sunni and the balance  
being in Shi'a; that's I think because of the major push here in the Shi'a parts  
of Baghdad by the corps, where we weren't doing that before.

We are now almost full-bore into all of our new programs -- the  
transition in barracks, where we do some initial -- not "some" but a lot of  
initial assessments to understand who we've got and what their orientation  
towards religion, their skill, their education, their morale and motivation of  
what got them here. We are assigning them to certain theater internment  
facilities based on, you know, what our assessment is of being able to take them  
from, if they are on the extremist end or just under the unemployment end, to  
kind of get them modeled back and bend them back to our will. We have our  
education courses going; probably just under or just at 7,000 now are in basic  
ed from one to five.

Our religious enlightenment courses are really up and running now.  
Vo tech has just started, and our work programs are going very well.

Our follow-on assessments are exciting. We're finding that we can bring some of the edge off of the folks, put them back through our assessments and determine that we've been able to, you know, bring them back to a point where we can at least evaluate them. Now, I'm not talking about anybody that comes in, in the last month or two, but we're talking about guys that have been here for a couple of years now.

And we feel comfortable enough that we can conduct a panel of officers looking at both the intelligence side and the open source information that we have on these guys, all the results of their interrogation, the results of their course work and how they participated in the -- while they were in the theater internment facilities, and then make some recommendations as to their release.

And I think probably the most exciting information is, we've not had anybody return in the four and a half months of doing this program. So we've not had one returnee or recapture out of this program, where we would have expected the number to be about 6.4 percent. In fact, it's interesting; the period of time from January to when we started this program, January to May, that group exceeded 2.4 percent in terms of recapture, so that we -- if we had continued with mass release or without the program, we would have ended up with, I think, a number that probably would have approached 7 or 8 percent recapture. And obviously, what I'm trying to do is get us down to the lowest possible number. And as soon as we have jobs for these guys, we'll probably take that thing down well under 1 percent.

That's kind of my opening comments.

MR. HOLT: Excellent. Sounds like progress being made, sir.

Thank you very much.

We've got Matt Armstrong on the line. So Matt, you were first on the line, why don't you get us started?

Q Thank you. General, when we spoke last time -- sorry, that static's my end. When we spoke last time when you were in this forum, I didn't mention that you and I had actually met at the ONR-F&T conference last year, and --

GEN. STONE: Hello, Matt. How are you doing?

Q I'm good. I'm good. Thanks. And it's -- I mean, you were extremely innovative there, and it's great to see you innovative where you are now.

I have a question. It's kind of left field, I guess, in the general sense of this forum, but it's a question about how you're running the prisons and how you're looking for how you might be doing it in the future. There's a number of people that are looking for robots to augment or even replace humans in prisoner management. The idea is that you take emotions out of the loop and you prevent things like Abu Ghraib in the future -- not that you have anything like that that's going on there. But there are people that are thinking that robots would help prevent that, et cetera, and you can put warfighters back out on the line.

What are your thoughts on that?

GEN. STONE: Well, you know, I'm in the battlefield of the mind right now. The basic care and custody that takes place is done in a very large compound, thousand-person compounds. Now we're -- I think if we were -- if you were on the last time, you might have heard me say we are trying to change that configuration to modular detainee housing units. If we were able to get them into smaller organization -- not necessarily -- smaller configurations, then I think you've got yourself into a physical management problem that's different than these compounds, and robotics, I think, would make a lot of sense.

You know, you certainly could use robotics for perimeter protection or perimeter identification for sensing a lot of things that, you know -- I'd have to back up and, you know, grab ahold of all my robotics background and kind of dig in and sort of see where things are at, but I can see if the physical environment is right how you could use them. But right now, remember, my top priority is obviously to ensure that care and custody is done, but it's also to determine if this detainee is an imperative security risk. That's the only authority under which I'm allowed to hold them, and if I determine that they're no longer a security risk, then I -- you know, I let them go.

So that determination is much more steep in the basics of the program that I've put in place. So I got to identify -- I got to find and identify the extremists and segregate them. I don't know that robotic would help me with that. I've got to dig into their mind. I've got psychiatrists and psychologists, you know, and interrogation work and counseling work. I'm not sure robotics are there yet on that. I've got to work with the -- knock the edge off their understanding or frankly their misunderstanding of the Koran, and you know, so I've got moderate imams that are working with that.

And you can -- if I walk through counseling or I walk through family involvement or multi-layer evaluations, all those, job placement, you know, continuing education, I think there's a role for automation there. And you know, we're working hard on how we might use programming, you know, TV programming or on-demand kinds of things to try to get these guys to basically destroy the destructive ideology that's there.

But once they're no longer a threat, then I -- you know, I'm working to keep them off the streets. And most of these guys are here because they were either threatened or they are unemployed. And I don't know yet how robotics would help. But when they form a prison -- and I don't run prisons; I run detention facilities -- the Iraqis could easily use some form of robotics for primitive security. And I could see how that would -- how that might work.

Q Thank you.

MR. HOLT: Thank you very much.

CJ Grisham.

Q Yes, sir.

General, how are you doing?

GEN. STONE: I'm doing fine. Thank you.

Q CJ from A Soldier's Perspective. I'm an active duty soldier also and also an interrogator, did a little more than 300 interrogations while I was in Iraq.

One of the things that, I think, impresses me about having you in charge of this is the fact that I've read in numerous places that you actually read and understand the Koran. And my question to you is, our team did the same thing while we were there, and it seemed to be highly successful. What is being done in our prison system to educate our soldiers, not to indoctrinate them, you know, or change their religion, but to educate them in what the Koran says so that they can intelligently interrogate the detainees that are there? And is there any training going on in theater that makes them a little more capable and able to attack those problems that they have right now with Sunni extremists? GEN. STONE: Well, it's a great question, and I wish I could give you a -- you know, a remarkably brilliant answer on how these programs sort of taken off and we've done all kinds of things to train.

I was training, as you know, all the Marines before they came over, and we had brought in cultural awareness. Since I've been here, the two colonels that I've had that are -- the commanders over the -- all interrogation for detainees have absolutely glommed on to this perspective. I mean, I do read the Koran every morning every day. I -- in fact, I do not give a presentation in Arabic without sourcing the Koran. We are increasingly making the fundamental mistakes that are made in interpretation, whether by omission or commission, of the many Shari'a court, and, you know -- I call them fraudulent, but, you know -- fraudulent imams that are actually inside the compounds. We have a directory now where we can take those arguments and tear them apart.

The many religious leaders, all imams that we have working for us teach out of a moderate doctrine, which brings to bear every one of -- you know, the seven mortal sins and that sort of thing, and tears apart, particularly the Takfirs in al Qaeda's arguments, you know, for things that are -- you know, I mean sort of the basics like, you know, let's kill innocents; you're not allowed to -- you can do various things, which they believe that they can. And once they can read -- and I mean, you're talking about the basics here -- once they can actually read the words themselves and they believe the Koran they're reading -- this is something that we changed, which is a bizarre thing but true -- then they actually can begin a conversation between the two of them.

And since we've now run, you know, a few hundred through this program, we are over-the-top encouraged that two things are present. We are able to determine the guys that don't really give a shit about the Koran in the first place -- they're using it as a discipline -- those guys are beginning to fall into the category of irreconcilables, and that's helpful to me. I want to know who they are. They're like rotten eggs, you know, hiding in the Easter basket, so that's very helpful.

Then it's also equally helpful to have guys who come out and say, "I didn't know that. Now that I know that, I'm going to change my life." And we poly them. You'd be -- interesting to know, because we were trying to figure out if they're messing with us. But we are convinced that they have made a significant change. Now you're not talking about, you know, radicals going to choir boys, but you're talking about radicals that won't use the Koran without -- for violence without a very clear understanding that they're damned if they do.

And that brings in the counseling psychologist. We've got more counseling psychologists going on for, you know, all kinds of problems associated with that than you can imagine. So it is a tragedy that the religion has been used by the extremists to control an illiterate -- and to do discipline

an illiterate population, but that is what we're finding. And again, I'm encouraged that we've been able to turn it around. All my interrogators understand this. We meet with them every single week, and they are far more culturally sensitive than they have ever been.

I -- it is the first thing that I do in the morning -- first official thing I do in the morning is go through every one of the interrogation reports. So we do 500 or so per week, and we've now got them categorized by various categories like this one. We're learning from the detainees, and we are able, I think -- I think you'd be encouraged to know -- if you were over here working here now, you would be encouraged to know that you would be a part of this process: the early identification of who the extremists are, where they got that extremism, and now be able to refer them to the -- you know, it's a different task force; they started the task force, 300 leadership, who takes them, along with this assessment, and drives a specific program against it so they'll get a six-week program aimed at certain things.

So interrogation is absolutely vital. It is -- I could not be doing what we're doing if we didn't have the level of interrogation, and I most assuredly couldn't be doing it if the interrogators didn't understand what, I think -- and frankly, and heretofore they have not understood, that is the motivations behind why these guys are here in the first place.

Q Thank you, sir.

MR. HOLT: Jarred Fishman. Q Yes, sir. Thank you for your time. I have a two-part question. First is, the Sunni political parties have -- oftentimes their foremost complaint is their number of Sunni captives and/or people who are being held by the coalition and Iraqi forces. Have you seen some kind of a trend where they're saying, okay, we see the efforts you guys are making to try to release them, and that's why they're coming back into the government and having more of a reconciliation effort. Have you seen any of that kind of on the ground?

GEN. STONE: (Laughs.) You know, I love this question. I'm going to give you the true answer, and you can pick up the phone and call General Petraeus and he'll tell you. General Petraeus said to me -- when Vice President Tariq Hashimi was on the fence, you know, he's pulling out -- he said, "You go over and you talk to this guy," and I did. And I've been an associate of his since I've been here; you know, Dr. Omar Jabouri (sp), who is, you know, in (books ?). These are the Sunni guys, and I have met with them now many, many times. And what I did to Tariq is I took over and I showed him a video of all the programs, and then I said to him, "Listen, you know, we are going to work together, you and I, at Ramadan, and we'll announce Lion's Paw." Lion's Paw is an operation which we did announce and we announced it between he and I.

And I said, "In return for that, I'm going to do exactly what I'm going to do anyway, but in return for that, you can say that you understood it and that you endorse it and that we'll work today and you'll stay inside the government and, you know, you'll do your best."

And Tariq has been every single day of Ramadan to one of the releases, to the pledging guarantor ceremonies. He has given the most eloquent, the most -- just incredibly moving presentations to these guys, saying: "Listen, I understand that what you did was done for a reason. What I am telling you is what the coalition forces are doing for you, what General Stone is doing for you

in the youth education, these are things that we are not even doing for own people. And you have to help us do that."

I mean, if I could play for you the recordings -- and I -- I'm tempted to do it because he's been filming them all for himself, and I'm sure if you could get on the Islamic news, you would find him. But if you saw the key messages that he has been giving, they are over the top. And so, I haven't seen the boss yet, he's -- you know, he's working his way home. But I do -- I always brief him for about an hour on all our programs and everything we're doing. And Friday I'm taking in with me, you know, the quotes from Vice President Hashimi, the -- I'm taking in a brand new program that he's created for referrals for these guys.

If you were on my side of -- you know, the Sunni concern in the April and May and early June time frame and the number of times that they sent over, you know, this -- you know, sort of these messages like, you know, "You evil empire" kind of stuff, and then to have him go out to the programs and look at the education taking place, go to the youth school, go see the counseling and psychiatrist programs that are going on, and then to see us moving in a very clear process to get these guys evaluated and out.

And I've told them, "I'm not letting guys out that I think are not as secure." He says, "I understand that." He said, "I believe you are a fair and honest man, and I support that."

And those -- and we have never once gone back on our word to him. And he, frankly, has never once gone back on his word to us. So, the answer to your question is, I think we've kept him in the government, and I think my boss thinks that, at least that's the input that I've gotten back. I know that Vice President Hashimi sent a very nice letter -- handed a very nice letter to President Bush when he was out here, so he has to have some kind of orientation towards that. You know, I just have to believe that. But yes, I think the answer is simply yes.

MR. HOLT: Okay. Charlie Quidnunc.

GEN. STONE: Yeah?

Q Thank you very much, General. I'm Charlie Quidnunc with Whizbang Podcast, a political blog. I have a question about scale and scope. In the information about the call, they talked Operation Lion's Paw and the House of Wisdom for juvenile detainees. Is -- you say that has a capacity of about 800.

Is that the only facility? Do you need more facilities like that or do we have enough?

GEN. STONE: Well, let me make sure we separate the two. Lion's Paw is simply a joint announcement and program which is really a mutual endorsement between Vice President Hashimi and myself, the Sunni government and the MNF-I, and his ability to be able to say what is the truth, and that is that he has played a role and influenced and made suggestions and the program has been architected, you know, around a lot of concepts, of which his is one. That's one side.

The Dar al-Hikma, the House of Wisdom, the program for the youth, probably caps for us at about 1,200. If we start to get a huge run on youth, we'll have to go to a different system where maybe they go every other day or

something like that. But right now that's kind of -- the program is not scaled -- we're not worried about the number of students we could get through there, we're really worried about the living capacity, because I have a hard time taking the Taqfirists, the adults, away from these guys when they can reach them by (rock mail ?) or yell at them. So that's the physical dimension that I'm concerned about.

But we have the new modular housing -- detainee housing units, which we can build out at FOB Constitution. So I'm not -- I'm not losing sleep over them overpowering me with youth. I think we've got 30 classrooms, we can adjust classroom size; we've got the teachers, the counselors; we've got four very large soccer programs; we've got more space to expand. So I think we'll be okay on youth. That's my intuition. And again, I don't see the numbers running up right now.

MR. HOLT: Okay. Any follow-up questions?

Q What about adults? Are you doing detainee operations with adults as well?

GEN. STONE: Yeah, good point. Now, on adults, you know, I'm not driving my decisions on capacity. I have submitted and designed two new facilities, which have been funded by -- well, all the way up through DOD, over to Congress, and Congress has funded them. So I'm building two brand-new facilities, one in the Baghdad area and one in Ramadi, and we've just broken ground. And we will be moving detainees -- I think our process will be probably run them through the current programs at Bucca and then transfer them up. If they're from the Al Anbar area, they'll go out through Ramadi. But we'll be able to handle -- my conservative estimate is another 15,000 in that process.

I can't tell you what's going to happen with releases other than, you know, we think we're seeing about 25 percent right now that probably are okay to be released. So we're kind of working our way through those numbers. There's another 30 percent that we wouldn't release under, I think, almost any situation right now. We don't have the programs to turn them, and they don't want to be turned.

So it's that middle ground that I don't know. I don't know how much longer the corps is going to continue to pound on, you know, bringing detainees in. But I know that we've had a major effect for the corps to be able to bring in security in many of these areas. Because we -- the number that we've taken in far exceeds any other four-month period in the history of the entire war.

And furthermore, the number that we've released is far less than any period, and you can take any period and cut it in half. So we've basically released almost -- well, very few. So we're buying time for the corps. Now, if I can turn these guys and spin them around and get them back out, you know, after a year's worth of time, and that's about the average that I think we'll have, and we have these additional facilities, it's a balancing act, but I think we'll be okay. I, you know, I mean, I'm targeting that the worst case: We'd go up around 50,000, and I think we'll be able to handle that.

Q General, it's CJ from A Soldier's Perspective.

Just a quick question based off something you just said, and then I'll get to my main question. But the Lion's Paw operation -- is that kind of a

loose reference to Saddam Hussein's child organization, Ashbal Saddam? Or is that --

GEN. STONE: (Laughs.) Well, Lion -- we started to name three operations: Lion's Pride, Lion's Paw, Lion's Leap, Lion's Roar. Those are all operations that I've got undergoing. And it really started with the basic concept that, you know, Iraq looks like a lion. And then we announced each one of them.

Lion's Paw actually came from a famous operation. It was actually an operation by the British a long time ago. And it was one that, in this particular case, Vice President Hashimi knew about, so we just kind of named it after that. But yes, you're probably right. (Laughs.) There's actually a couple references. You look at history and see a couple.

Q Okay, and my main question is, the L.A. Times reports that a lot of boys, some as young as 11, now outnumber the foreign fighters that are at the detention camps in Iraq. And I believe you were quoted as saying, the number's risen from -- to 800 from 100 since March. Is this making a difference in how our detainees are handled, how the war's being fought? And how do we know now if a child is a killer or an innocent bystander just kind of swept up with the crowd?

GEN. STONE: Yeah, it's a -- all good questions. Let me reconfirm what I did say.

The number of third-country nationals we have now are about 280. I mean, I haven't quite checked this morning. I don't remember seeing any coming in. So those are the third-country nationals we have, or what you would call foreign fighters, right? I mean, guys that aren't Iraqis. And our number is -- it's a little over 800 and if I can find the document that's sitting in front of me, which I'm not finding. Wait a minute. That number's probably -- I don't know, let's just make it 820 or so and change. Actually, foreign fighters are 282, and juveniles are just under -- it's about 840-something, so we had 6 come in yesterday.

So now, the trend is towards the youth. And you know, if they're 11 years old and 12 years old and 13 years old, we tend to see them, the psychologists tend to see them as, you know, kids that, you know, are -- can be told to do anything and they'll go do it. The older ones, the 15, 16, 17-year-old ones, you know, they're the harder nuts. And again my numbers are going to be a little bit off, but 50 to 60 of those we've been able to actually get criminal court hearings against.

They've been found guilty, and they'll be getting -- they're going to be held in juvenile prison over in Tupshai (ph) for some time.

And so the answer is, we're treating the youth in some respects as we -- with the same program, although different. I have a specialist in Islamic youth programs here now, designing the education system. And that's in part why the Iraqis are coming over to kind of take a look at it, because they're really fascinated by it. It's a positive program that has been proven in Islam to actually turn the kids around to sort of reject some of these other things.

But almost universally, once the youth are into serious violence -- in fact, let me make a comment before I do that. The youth records are different than the adult records, because the youth records seem to show that they have



done a little bit of everything. In other words, they were a little bit of a notifier; a little bit of, you know, a guard; a little bit of an IED player; a little bit of this, little bit of that; whereas the adults tend to specialize and kind of really fit into, you know, their own particular space and be a part of the subcontractor relationship, if you will.

So the youth that ultimately get to specialists -- I mean, they can be killers and are killers. And we've had youth kill other youth in the detention facility before. So those guys are -- have already skipped over. They're now adults. They act like it. And then they get dealt with in the criminal system the way that you would expect them to be dealt with.

It's the rest of them that we're trying to turn in, and I wish I had lots of numbers that I'd been able to release and tell you how well they're working. The bigger numbers that I have are those that we're working with that don't want to be released, or they're -- you know, their guardians or their parents don't want them to be released. So we'll just have to stay dialed on this. You know, I'm -- this is -- this kind of psychological work is not my forte or my domain, per se. It -- you know, it has become so as we've identified the battlefield of the brain.

But we do know on the adults we were making some difference, because we have no recapture or recidivist rate to point to yet, and we would have expected it. Just numerically, we should have had a certain number, and we haven't.

I'm not sure where we're going to go with the youth, other than I'm very hopeful. They're easy to get along with. I mean, I waded into them, I'm friendly, I talk to them. You know, they seem to be very, very malleable, and that's what everybody who's a professional in this field tells us, so fingers crossed. We'll see.

Q Thank you, sir.

MR. HOLT: All right. Any other questions?

Q One quick follow-up, sir. Could we get someone at the Public Affairs Office to write up these stories? Because there's a lot of good news here, which really is not getting out at all. Even among the bloggers here, there's really not a lot of articles online as far -- or --

GEN. STONE: You know, it is amazing you said that. In fact, I am going to put Commander Marshall on the phone right now. He's my PAO. He just -- his eyes just went up like, you know -- like the kids do when we tell them you're chosen. But there are programs that I think we could slam out to talk to you one at a time, each that have amazing data points to them, okay? And if you'll allow me -- do I have a couple more minutes?

MR. HOLT: Yes, sir.

GEN. STONE: Okay. If you'll allow me just to kind of rattle off the kinds of things that I think are fascinatingly of interest -- in the meantime, Commander, this fellow wants to talk to you about more PAO stuff about this stuff, okay? So I'll put you on.

But, you know, I tell all my troops that we are not here to have success, that success is what you have when you have, you know, an A on your art project or you negotiate a deal and get a good contract. We're here -- and, you

know, I've handed out now 33 Purple Hearts yesterday, and I've had two KIAs -- there is no question but that when you're in the business we're in, when war is an active force to compel our enemy to do our will, and where the only means by which we fight that war is combat, that there's only one judgment about what happens day in and day out, and that's either victory or defeat.

And I make this point emphatic to all my troops, that, you know, when our troops are hurt on an IED incident, that the enemy had a victory that day and we had a defeat. We didn't have a bad day or, you know, a nonsuccessful event; we frickin' got defeated on that day. And so they -- they hear from me, and I pound on them mercilessly about our responsibility to establish an alliance and empower the moderate Iraqis to effectively marginalize the violent extremists. That's what victory means to me. And then they know that our -- and I think that's a topic that America needs to hear, that at least in big chunks of the war going on, you know, we are about trying to have victory.

The second -- and we can quantify it and we can say what it is and we can measure it, and I do every day. And then I think they need to hear about the objectives. I mean, sure, we're here to enforce or ensure our standards of care and custody are met, but I'm also here to determine if a detainee is an imperative security risk.

And so -- and if he is a risk, then I'm going to reduce that risk, and I'm going to replace that destructive ideology. And then when he's assessed to no longer be a threat, I'm going to release the detainee being less likely to be a recidivist. I mean, that's what the charter is, and along the way, we're going to identify -- so I think that whole process is interesting. I think the -- and I think it's compelling because it's how you win this war, not only the one in Iraq, but the one on a greater basis. I mean Dr. Hashimi -- I mean Vice President Hashimi said the other day, "America could win the war if they just applied the exact process that you're putting in detention to the rest of the entire nation." You know, get out there -- yes, use force, you know, to the extremists and identify them and segregate them, but get on with, you know, helping the rest of the population get up on their feet with all the programs.

So you know, we got to identify irreconcilables. I think that's fascinating how to do it. It's never been done before, and I'm not sure I've got a good answer, but it's a hell of an interesting discussion. And then defeat the insurgencies that get formed inside the theater internment facility. I mean most guys say to me, "Geesh! I didn't know an insurgency existed." It does exist, and they are real and they are fighting us left and right. And they -- we talk about a battlefield in the mind, I mean, they're going for the mind. You should see the training things that they try to do to the detainees, and we're countering them. We're busting them down. We're making moderate -- whole moderate compounds that didn't exist before.

Now, I'll tell you something that has never happened, in my recollection, in detention and happened on September the 2nd of this year. We had a compound of moderates for the first time overtake Takfirist extremists. It's never happened before. Found them, identified them, threw them up against the fence, and shaved the fricken beards off of them. That -- I mean, that is historic. I mean, I think -- I mean -- and I could give you another two or three like that. But I mean, when you're in my business and you see something like that happen, you just go, "You're kidding me!"

I mean, the moderates are -- even the moderate insurgents, I mean, are winning out here, and I mean -- and that's what, I think, gets -- Vice President

Hashimi and these other guys who come out and talk to these detainees one on one. That's what they get. I mean, we don't get detainees ever standing up and saying, "Americans suck." I mean, we don't get that. What we get is -- you know, we're being treated right, and there's something to go for. What we get from our interviews with al Qaeda -- and I'm going to spend a lot of time with General Petraeus on this on Friday -- is a very clear message: If these guys don't have jobs, what in the hell else are they going to do? I mean, if somebody's going to pay them, you know, a couple hundred bucks, they're going to go that way.

So you know, you've got the transition barracks in and all the messages -- that's a fantastic story, I think. We've got all the education classes, and fact that we now get detainees helping with that education, monitored, by the way, by us.

We've got this -- the brand-new and created one-of-a-kind, albeit homogenized, among seven other programs, on religious enlightenment -- never been done before. Fascinating course, and working -- I mean, working as good as I would want it to work, right now. I mean, I'm running a big factory here. I'm not doing an individual, you know, gig like, you know, Saudi -- they can pick those guys, give them a million bucks and give them a wife. That's not the business we're in.

You know, with the individual assessments and how we assess them, and the individual boards, just sitting down with each one of these guys -- you know I've done 4,578 individual boards with panels, with three officers, DBAs and others, talking to detainees. I mean, you ask where in the world can you sit down and talk to guys who have spent time, a half hour, with an al Qaeda, saying, "Why in the hell did you do that," one on one -- I mean, not one on one, one on three. But I mean, you know, it's a fascinating story. I mean, to me it is, anyway.

You know, we also have the new transition-out barracks, where we talk about civics and, you know, human rights and -- you know, and those kinds of things, and to hear those -- hear their responses.

And then the whole pledge and guarantor -- I mean, we had a mother so overjoyed she fainted yesterday. You know, we've had detainees, you know, when we said to them, "Okay, which gate do you want to go out," just -- you know, just over-ecstatic that they get to make a choice, I guess, you know, I mean.

And then we're working on a new program, which I can't talk about yet, but I want the boss to agree with me. And it's one of the Lion's series operations about what we're going to do with them post-release.

Now, my whole objective is to keep these guys away from our troops. I don't want one of these guys -- I mean, if there's anything I can do, any money I can spend, any time I can put on it -- to harm one more soldier or one more Marine, I mean, or one more anybody. But I mean, those are the guys that get harmed the most. And that's my goal. I mean, my goal is, they're not going out of here unless I can feel comfortable about that. I'm not doing mass releases. I mean, there's a bunch of things I'm not doing.

By the same token, you know, you're going to have programs. And so we've got -- and this is -- and I'll just read them -- I've got, you know, COIN operations inside and outside the TIF. I've got moderates working against extremists from the inside of the compounds. I've got reintegration teams on the

outside, catching them and trying to work with them out there. I've got detainee -- a huge, expensive -- (chuckling) -- detainee motivation and morale study going on with RAND Corporation. We've got -- but they're great, great guys, and they are over the top -- I mean, these guys are wedded to what we're doing, and they are helping out day -- we got an IO campaign going in and outside. You know, I think I'm going to be starting a big thing, which I'd love to talk about when I'm -- you know, as soon as I know I can get it, in terms of communications.

We've got -- we're training Iraqi judicial investigators to get a better quality of evidentiary packet when they come in.

Irreconcilables, we're -- with that whole process I just mentioned, we've got it -- trying to figure out how to determine them, how to put them away. You know, we've got on-FOB work programs, these brick factories. We've got the ministers of Iraq being involved with this. We're training Iraqi correction officers in our academies that we've put together. We've got detention and COIN media campaign under way. We've got design of these new installations, these modern -- these MDHUs that we're putting in place for the first time.

We've got a hold of JIATF and said, you know, "How come you guys aren't out here using our resources?" Hell, we got all the guys who made the damn IEDs. We ought to be breaking them apart and studying them and figuring out what the hell would it take to not, you know, place an IED. So we've got teamwork going on with them.

And we've got a ton of detainee feedback going on, because interrogation now isn't just at the beginning. It's in every single step, all the way through our entire process.

So, you know, to me, every one of those things is interesting, and I think every one of those things professionals, like you guys, would find -- would be able to find, think about, write about, critique, comment on, give me feedback about, and say, "Hey, have you thought about?"

And to me, that is the value of this discussion that we got to have, because I am not -- and I don't know any -- well, I mean, I shouldn't say that. But I'm not out here, you know, for social work. That's not what I'm doing. We're out here because war is an act of force and we're going to compel this enemy to do our will. And our will is that the moderates are going to win out. And so everybody that's in my detention is either going to go out doing that, because that's what will -- our will is, or they're not going out.

And I think guys like you can think about that, put it in the parlance of Clausewitz or anybody you want, and help me think this thing through, just like the idea about robotics, others -- I mean, bounce them off me, because I'll tell you something, guys. You know, I mean, I may know Islam, might be able to speak the language. I may know a lot about the religion. I may know a lot about the people. I may know a lot about fighting this war. I might be an innovator. But at the end of the day, this is about being victorious across the whole board, and no individual can do that by themselves.

None of us are smart enough -- there is no doctrine -- I can't go to a book and figure out how to do what I'm doing. I can't pick up any doctrine, even the COIN manual, as much as I like it, and find out how to do what I'm doing in detention. There's nothing to that.

So -- and there's not anybody that picks up the phone and calls me and says, "Hey, how about -- you know, really, you're screwing up because you really ought to be doing this," you know? But guys like you can. So I'm sorry to rattle on, but by God, that's what I think are a list of questions that I would ask me.

Q Is there anyone that can get transcripts from some of these interrogations? They're redacted or something --

GEN. STONE: Yeah, it's an interesting question. I don't know that I can give you the -- well, let me check. Let me check. I think -- that's a good question: Can we get transcripts of interrogations?

I know that we declass the commentary. It's a good question. Because I tell you what, we brought all the commanders together the other day and had an entire book broken out by the entire different categories, specifically focused on al Qaeda -- you know, I mean everything from like their motivations -- and it was -- there was no analysis in any of it. It was strictly just a matter of taking al Qaeda's specific commentary on specific topics, putting it into a table of contents and then handing it out. It's about an inch and a half thick. It's very -- it's fascinating.

But I mean to me, I don't know why we couldn't let that out. I mean -- you know? (Laughs.) But -- so I'll go look at that. I think there's -- I'd love to publish something like that or, you know, get it out of here, so Commander Marshall's putting that on his list of things.

But I will -- I mean, you guys give me ideas, we will fire this stuff out. If I could declassify everything, I would, just so that, you know, we could get some kind of help. I wouldn't want to get somebody killed or hurt -- and you guys wouldn't want that, either -- but most of what we have, I'm convinced, you know, just isn't that secret. I mean, hell, al Qaeda doesn't work in anything that's secret. I mean, they're just -- they're open-sourced to everything.

MR. HOLT: (Inaudible.) Q It -- General, one more quick, easy question. In the past four and a half months since you've started this program, how many have been released under the program?

GEN. STONE: We have -- oh, I'm trying to get to the -- we've had -- C-R-R -- oh, shoot. This is year-to-date. I need a May date, I need a May number. Hang on a second. I could give it for the year. It's the May problem I -- (pause) -- okay. I think -- I think -- and if you'll not hold me to this -- I think we have released 1,954.

Q Okay, and of those, not one have returned?

GEN. STONE: Not one yet, not one, and I have a team standing by like vultures on a, you know, on a clothesline, right up front, right after they come in, for any recapture notification. Hang on. No, that's just the monthly breakdowns. Yeah, so I think that number's close. So you know, roughly 2,000, I'm guessing, and we've not had any coming back yet.

Now, there is some early indication that guys have been rolled up, but that's because the database wasn't COINed on them. They weren't doing anything.

They were going through, you know, a checkpoint. Their name came up on the BATTed, and the went in.

So those guys -- I can't speak to the divisions below me, okay? We're going out and checking on that now with the RAND Corporation. And some of those guys might have been rolled up, but they appear to mostly be database. But in terms of coming through the process and getting through the theater internment facility, not yet.

MR. HOLT: All right, sir.

Okay, anything else.

Q Yes, all right, this is Matt Armstrong with Mountain Runner again, if I can follow up.

GEN. STONE: Matt, go.

Q General, you'd mentioned about Dr. Hashimi, the VP, saying that, you know, if we applied this broader. That's an excellent idea. And what I kept hearing in this is, where is State, and where is the non-military coming into this process? And are they asking? Are you telling? Is there any communication back and forth there?

And second --

GEN. STONE: Well, let me tell you -- yeah, let me tell you what Hashimi -- what Vice President Hashimi gave to the president. And I only know this because he gave me a copy of the letter. Basically it was this program. But it combined -- and I thought this was a very insightful and thoughtful way. I mean, we had talked about this, but he wrote it in a very eloquent manner. It was, what about doing a New Deal for Iraq? There are, you know, by his estimation, about four-and-a-half-million men that need to either get their education, get their -- you know, get the right skill sets -- bring them through a process, put them on a public works program and pay them 300, 350 bucks a month, which is all they need. And that's -- I mean, that's below a cop, right below a cop, and it's above, you know, necessity. That will put the pride back in the individual and the pride back in the family.

So he combined the concept of doing this, in other words, starting on that one end of the flow, assessing them, BATting, whatever you want to do, getting them through. I can see tons, and so can the guys listening in on this. You can hear tons of ways in which you can use this information, right? You get them; you BAT them; you bring them through. But they would then go out and do public works stuff. They'd clean canals and they would, you know, work on the basics, the infrastructure, not compete with private industry in any way and not do it for a long time, in other words, six months or a year.

So I agree with you. And I will tell you, there's not one guy in my line of work; there's not one commander that I have; there's not one guy in interrogation who won't tell you, the number one problem to drain the swamp of the coalition guys -- I mean the countercoalition guys, the ones that we're rolling up, is jobs.

They need to get work. They don't have it, and so they go get -- and this is true for the kids, as well. I mean, do you think the youth, I mean, wake up in the morning at 12 and say, "I think I'll go lay an IED"? I mean,

there is some of that role modeling and role patterning going on, but very, very little. I mean, that's what the shrinks tell me. Very little. These are guys who their parents say, "Okay, you'll give me what? Three hundred fifty if he does what? Okay, I'm going to make him go to do it." And that's the case. And 350 bucks for some of these guys could be two months. And it could -- the family could get by on three months with that.

So, you know. Now, to link with the State, I have talked to Ambassador Crocker about this, I've talked to his people. I was just in a meeting over at the embassy yesterday on this, and it's a program that I'm thinking about trialing with the detainees, and I will be presenting it to the boss here on Friday.

Now, I mean, again -- you know, sort of, what's the mission of MNF-I? And that's for General Petraeus to decide. You know, he'll have to say, "Yeah, I think that's worthy." But I know that the corps is talking about things, I know others, I know people beyond Doug Stone know that this is an issue.

It's just -- my motivation, to be honest with you, is exactly what I said before. I don't want these guys to hurt a Marine or a soldier. So, if I can get them out and get them on a pledge and guarantor and I have a reduced recapture rate, that's good. But I'm also not naive. If they don't have any income, they're going to go back. So I'm thinking about a self-enlightened program for the detainees for six months to a year to keep them off the streets. You know, if I can just buy one or two years in detention and one year on the outside, that's three years. That's a lot of time. I don't know how many troops that would save, but that's a lot of troops. And, you know, and I love every one of them. I've been to too many funerals and I've been to too many ceremonies. I don't want any of them hurt. And that's how -- and I'm looking at it very simply like that. I'm not a do-gooder. That's not why I'm here. But I do know that if they're off the streets, they're not going to come after our troops.

Now, comma, the side of it is that if they're not doing that -- I mean, if they're not part of the problem, they don't have to necessarily be part of the solution, but it drains the swamp enough so we can find the guys that really are the bad guys. And those guys we can go get. And then, we got enough resources to find them, fix them, and finish them. Q Great. The second thing is -- I'm sure all of us would be very interested in talking to your PA -- PAO a lot more after this.

GEN. STONE: Well, I'm going to get his butt -- he's right here -- and drag him over. Look at him, he's looking at me like, "Oh, my god." Do you want to talk to him?

Q Offline, just to follow up on the programs, at least for myself.

GEN. STONE: All right. Well, Commander Marshall, that's his name.

MR. HOLT: All right, we'll close this part of the program out right now.

General Stone, thank you so much for being with us, and we look forward to speaking with you again.

GEN. STONE: You bet. All right, well, my honor.

MR. HOLT: All right, sir, very good, thank you very much. And --

GEN. STONE: Hey, listen. I would just -- if you don't mind one parting comment. And I may be the only little guy out in the middle of a crowd shouting.

I mean, I get that. But from my neck of the woods and what I'm doing in my battlespace -- you know, I mean, I sit next to General Odierno and General Petraeus every morning in the meetings, watching what they're doing and everybody else -- I'm telling you, guys, don't give up on this. I mean, it is -- you can define what victory is, but I think -- I think, more than anybody else, it's -- we can walk away from this thing having learned a lot with our heads high and with a definition of victory that we're all going to say fits the situation.

And, you know, winning this war is not going to be like, you know, D-Day, and you guys know that. You know what a counterinsurgency is like. But right now we can turn this thing, and even turn it around to the point where I think you'll see Iraqi leadership step up. I mean, I have watched Vice President Hashimi in the last month slip from ardent, I'm on out, I'm going to kick you on the way out to I'm in and I'm pitching what needs to be done.

So I don't know. I mean, I'm not saying I got the answer; I don't. And I'm not saying -- you know, I'm speaking for policy; I'm not. But I'm not giving up on this thing, and I think victory is achievable. And if you talk to lance corporals and, you know -- and yeomen and airmen and, you know, and soldiers of every rank, they're going to tell you the same thing, and they're going to say, you know what? These guys will turn. So just hang on and try to help out. That's all I got to say.

Q Thank you, sir.

GEN. STONE: All right, guys. Hurrah.

MR. HOLT: Thank you very much. Major General Douglas Stone, commander -- commanding general of Task Force-134, thank you very much.

GEN. STONE: You bet. My honor, guys. Take care.

MR. HOLT: All right. Thank you, sir.

Q Thank you, sir.

Q Hey, thanks, Jack.

MR. HOLT: Thank you, sir. GEN. STONE: You bet.

END.